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AN OPERATIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE PEARL HARBOR ATTACK (U)

by

James E Hazuka

Major, USAF

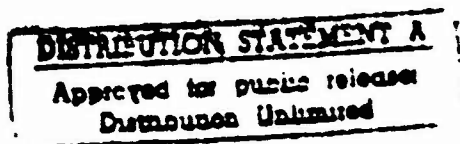
A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in Partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Departments of the Navy or the Air Force.

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during execution. Japan's narrow objective of destroying primarily capital ships, spared important logistical facilities from destruction. These support facilities proved to be the key to a quick restoration of U.S. naval presence in the region. Likewise, Japan's emphasis on placing a higher target priority for battleships versus carriers, allowed a more potent weapon system to essentially escape unscathed. This mistake had strategic implications in that aircraft carriers were the key weapon's platform used to destroy the Japanese Navy in later battles in the Pacific. Finally, the tactical commander's failure to exploit America's vulnerability when given the opportunity, minimized further damage which could have been inflicted upon the U.S. Pacific Fleet anchored at Pearl Harbor. These operational and tactical errors allowed America to quickly recover from the attack and pursue offensive actions in the Pacific within a few months. The net result of the Pearl Harbor attack along with subsequent operations, solidified Japan's position in the Southwest Pacific. However, flaws in operational planning and conservative military leadership during the plan's execution, guaranteed this dominance only in the short term.

Abstract of
OPERATIONAL LEVEL ANALYSIS OF THE PEARL HARBOR ATTACK

This paper is an analysis of the Pearl Harbor attack from a operational level of war perspective. Its purpose is to provide the reader with a Japanese viewpoint of the Pearl Harbor operation, and to determine if there were weaknesses with the plan and its execution. The study is limited in scope in that it will focus primarily on a single operation of the Pacific campaign initiated by the Japanese.

Much has been written about the devastation inflicted upon U.S. forces by Japan on 7 December 1941. Research initiated for this paper concludes that although the execution of the Pearl Harbor operation was successful, the operation did not achieve its strategic aim. A mismatch existed between operational and strategic objectives which was partially attributed to flaws in target selection, priority, and tactical level decision making during execution. Japan's narrow objective of destroying primarily capital ships, spared important logistical facilities from destruction. These support facilities proved to be the key to a quick restoration of U.S. naval presence in the region. Likewise, Japan's emphasis on placing a higher target priority for battleships versus carriers, allowed a more potent weapon system to essentially escape unscathed. This mistake had strategic implications in that aircraft carriers were the key weapon's platform used to destroy the Japanese Navy in later

battles in the Pacific. Finally, the tactical commander's failure to exploit America's military forces at its most vulnerable point, minimized further damaged which could have been inflicted upon the U.S. Pacific Fleet anchored at Pearl Harbor. These operational and tactical errors allowed America to quickly recover from the attack and pursue offensive actions in the Pacific within a few months. The net result of the Pearl Harbor attack along with subsequent operations, solidified Japan's position in the Southwest Pacific. However, flaws in operational planning and conservative military leadership during the plan's execution, guaranteed this dominance only in the short term.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The attack on Pearl Harbor was a carefully planned fleet-to-shore operation. It was initiated as a result of growing tensions between Japan and the United States over an embargo of oil and other materials. This deliberate action by the United States was designed to penalize Japan for its aggressive military intervention in Indochina. Given the lack of natural resources in their own country, the embargo had the affect of "drawing a line in the sand" for the Japanese. The attack was the initial operation of a multi-phased campaign to make Japan self-sufficient by occupying the mineral rich area's to the south, and to establish a defense line around Japan and her possessions. Subsequent operations in this campaign include invasion of the Philippines, British Malaya, Burma, and the Dutch East Indies. For the purposes of this paper, we will only concentrate on the Pearl Harbor portion of the plan.

From the Japanese perspective, war with the United States seemed inevitable. During the early 1900's, the Japanese government spent a considerable amount of their national budget building a formidable navy. Her contributions to the allied side during World War I was rewarded by receiving Germany's island possessions in the Pacific, north of the equator.¹ Therefore, Japan emerged from the war as a naval power with

enhanced prestige and an appetite for "primary influence" in the western Pacific region. The Japanese island possessions were strategically located close to U.S. controlled islands in the Pacific thus, a rivalry with America quickly ensued.

In 1918, the Imperial Defense Policy adopted by Japan identified the United States as their number one potential enemy.² This belief influenced all aspects of Japanese naval policy. A naval arms race resulted from increased tensions between the two nations. The Washington Agreement in 1922 deterred further escalation by limiting the number of ships each side could possess. The agreement and subsequent disarmament conferences, kept the size of the Japanese Navy inferior to United States naval forces. By 1936, Japan had withdrawn from the agreement, giving herself freedom to expand her navy. By 1941, the Japanese Navy "was more powerful than the combined British and United States fleets in the Pacific area."³ This new arms race led to President Roosevelt's decision to redeploy a significant part of the U.S. Pacific Fleet from San Diego to Hawaii in May 1940. It brought the total number of American warships operating out of the Hawaiian port to well over 100. This forward basing decision by President Roosevelt was seen by the Japanese as a provocative action.

Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, the Commander and Chief of Japan's Combined Fleet, was highly respected within the Japanese Navy. He had spent considerable time in the United States and understood that Japan could not compete with America's great

industrial capacity. Yet Yamamoto recognized, given the objectives of each nation, war was inevitable. His task therefore, was to develop a plan with a winning strategy against a superior foe.

The primary concern of Japanese war planners in 1941 was to secure a source of oil soon after hostilities were initiated.⁴ Many members of the Naval General Staff wanted to develop a bold plan employing a massive naval force to capture the southern mineral rich area's during the initial phase of the campaign. Admiral Yamamoto did not share this opinion. He was concerned about the large United States naval presence in Hawaii and its potential threat to disrupt these operations. Admiral Yamamoto opted for a multi-phased attack where the Japanese Navy would strike "a crippling blow at the U.S. Pacific Fleet simultaneously with the launching of the southern operations."⁵ His argument focused on the assumption that America's Pacific Fleet was its center of gravity in the region. Its destruction was essential before initiating military operations in the south to achieve Japan's ultimate objectives. A simultaneous strike would maximize the element of surprise, giving the Japanese the upper hand in future battles if they occurred.

Admiral Yamamoto was a firm believer in the destructive capability that could be achieved through projecting air power from the sea. He spent much of his military career developing air tactics for aircraft carriers. Yamamoto was therefore well equipped to initiate and direct planning efforts for a surprise

attack on Pearl Harbor. The strategic objective of the plan was "to cripple the American fleet with one blow as a preliminary to operations designed to capture the oil areas of Southeast Asia."⁶ The operational objective was to destroy the U.S. Pacific Fleet in harbor and as many aircraft as possible. Successful execution of the plan was expected to create an end state of Japanese naval dominance in the Pacific theater. Yamamoto reasoned that the shock of a decisive attack might drive the Americans to a negotiated peace with Japan in light of the deteriorating war situation in Europe. If he were wrong, Yamamoto felt it would take years for the United States to replace what it had lost in the attack. By that time, Japan could solidify the South Pacific region and retain it indefinitely.

The plan for the Pearl Harbor surprise attack was influenced by three events in history.⁷ The first was Admiral Togo's operation at Port Arthur during the Russo-Japanese war. This surprise attack on Russian ships in harbor by Japanese destroyers was highly successful because it neutralized Port Arthur throughout the remainder of the war. Additionally, Japan's victory in this limited conflict against a superior foe, gave them confidence that they could replicate this success in a war with the United States. The second was American Admiral Frank A. Schofield's mock attack of Hawaii with aircraft carriers in 1932. It exposed vulnerabilities with Hawaiian defenses which were never resolved and quickly forgotten by

virtually all except Admiral Yamamoto. The Third was the 1940 attack on the Italian Fleet by the British. In this operation, two waves of carrier based aircraft attacked the Italian Fleet anchored at Taranto Harbor in the Mediterranean. The operation lasted approximately an hour and was extremely successful in that three battleships were sunk by 24 planes. Japan's military leaders learned much from this operation because Taranto, like Pearl, had a very shallow harbor. Changes to aircrew bombing tactics and modifications to torpedoes, allowed the British to overcome this environmental constraint and achieve operational success. The attack decisively altered the balance of naval power in the Mediterranean Sea.

CHAPTER II

THE PLAN

Under Admiral Yamamoto's direction, the Hawaiian attack plan was set into motion. The plan called for an independent naval operation involving six aircraft carriers, two battleships, nine destroyers, three cruisers, three submarines and eight tankers. The battleships, destroyers, and cruisers would accompany the carrier strike task force and serve the carriers primarily as escorts and protection screens. Three submarines would serve as scouts, patrolling waters 200 miles ahead of the task force. Their primary function was to divert the ships in the event that other naval or commercial vessels were detected along the route. The tankers represented the logistics support for the task force. They were needed because some of the ships did not have the range (7500 miles round trip) to complete the operation without refueling. The carriers were considered the operational fires of the Pearl Harbor plan because their aircraft would attack targets of operational significance, essential in achieving the objective. Of the six carriers, the Akagi and the Kaga, were two of the most formidable in the world. Each could carry approximately 90 planes. Total number of aircraft on all carriers exceeded 400.¹

There were many tactical level hurdles to overcome with the plan if it were to be successful. As previously stated, Pearl

Harbor was very shallow. It had a maximum depth of only 45 feet. This posed a problem for torpedoes because when launched by air, they could submerge themselves in the harbor's bottom or get snagged by torpedo nets prior to reaching the target. The Japanese resolved this issue as the British did at Taranto by modifying the torpedo fins and to change aircrew flying tactics. Torpedo-bombers would be required to release their torpedoes at lower altitudes than normal. Hand picked Japanese aircrews trained around the clock to develop and fine-tune their skills on these new tactics. These included horizontal and dive-bombing, strafing tactics, and shallow-water torpedo drops. Yamamoto even went so far as to relocate their training to Kagoshima Bay in the southern tip of Japan, where the terrain strongly resembled that around Pearl Harbor. To overcome any difficulty presented by torpedo nets, some of the dive-bombers would target naval vessels. It's interesting to note that Admiral Husband E. Kimmel, Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet, decided not to install torpedo netting. He based his decision on the restrictive nature of the nets concerning ship access into and out of the harbor. His decision essentially doomed the battleships.'

The plan called for the Japanese task force to depart from Takan Bay in the Kurile Islands.¹⁰ This origination point was selected because it was isolated and would ensure their departure remained undetected. The task force was to proceed in an easterly direction on a northern route to Oahu between Midway

and the Aleutians.' This course was chosen over the normal southern course to avoid the most common commercial shipping lanes. The main objective here was to arrive at the aircraft launching point without being detected. The northern route offered this advantage. During the winter months however, storms in the Northern Pacific can create treacherous seas. Although high seas could pose problems for refueling efforts, the low probability of detection outweighed these concerns.

The task force would proceed at only a speed between 12 to 14 knots to conserve fuel. They would make their way to the stand-by point, north of Oahu and just out of the range of American land-based reconnaissance planes. At anytime during this phase of the operation, the task force could be recalled if ongoing negotiations between Japan and the United States would result in an agreement favorable to the Japanese. From the stand-by point, at a certain hour and day, they would proceed south at 24 knots until they reached the launching point which was approximately 230 miles north of Oahu. Given the range of the aircraft involved in the attack, it was essential to be relatively close to the island. This phase of the operation represented the "point of no return" and was to be conducted at night to minimize the possibility of detection.

The capital ships were considered America's center of gravity in the Pacific by the Japanese. The priority of targets was in the order that follows: battleships, carriers, and

Map of the northern route found on page 24.

aircraft.¹¹ Target locations included Pearl Harbor, and airfields at Ford Island, Hickam, Wheeler, Ewa, and Kaneohe. The operational objective was to be accomplished by formulating a strike force of fighters (air protection, strafing), dive-bombers (ships, aircraft on the ground), and torpedo-bombers (ships). The attack would be launched just before sunrise and would be preceded by a pre-operation reconnaissance flight to ensure the targets were not redeployed.¹² Once confirmation was received by the reconnaissance aircraft that the targets were still there, two waves of attack planes comprising approximately 180 aircraft each would be launched from the carriers one hour and fifteen minutes apart. The duration of the attack for both waves was between 30 and 60 minutes, after which, they would return to their respective carriers. If the first two waves of attack failed to attain the objectives set forth in the plan, a second overall attack would be launched. In the event that this happened, returning aircraft would be refueled, rearmed, and relaunched. The 360 aircraft attack force would represent the largest concentration of naval air power in the history of warfare up to that period. Additionally, 39 fighters would remain behind to provide an air umbrella above the fleet, and 40 others would be kept in reserve.¹³ Post-operation reconnaissance was prohibited to lessen the probability of locating the carriers by American forces. Battle damage assessment therefore, was accomplished by aircrews involved in the attack.

Approximately 12 Japanese "I" class submarines were to arrive at Oahu 48 hours before the attack to provide visual reconnaissance of the harbor. Once the attack was initiated, the submarines would sink any vessel(s) trying to leave the harbor. Five of the submarines came with midget submarines which were to access Pearl Harbor during the air attack and fire their torpedoes at any remaining naval targets.

Once the operation was completed, the task force would proceed west until it reached the safety of Japanese waters. The carrier force could skirt near Midway if it was experiencing a fuel shortage and if successful attacks in Oahu negated the possibility of enemy counter-air attacks. In the event that this happened, part of the task force (two carriers and two battleships) would join a neutralization unit of surface ships and carry out air attacks on Midway.¹⁴

Vice-Admiral Chuichi Nagumo was selected as the Carrier Task Force Commander and served as the tactical level commander of the operation. Admiral Yamamoto, the Combined Fleet Commander, functioned as the operational level commander.

OPERATIONAL DECEPTION TO ACHIEVE SURPRISE

Admiral Yamamoto believed that the operation could only be successful if it took the United States forces by complete surprise. If the task force was spotted by enemy forces, it must abort its mission at once and return to Japan. The Pearl Harbor attack plan was war-gamed to determine its effectiveness in Tokyo, September 1941.¹⁵ The results showed that an attack

from the north was less likely to be spotted by the enemy than one from the south. It also determined that the attack could only be successful if it completely surprised the enemy. If not, it could prove to be a major disaster for the Japanese Navy.

The plan and preparations were conducted in complete secrecy. Only a few officers knew of its existence. Not even the aircrews training for the operation were aware of the mission they were about to embark.

Individual components of the task force left their home ports at various times and formed the carrier task force in the remote harbors of the Kurile Islands. This deceptive action was taken to minimize suspicion that a major operation was taking place. Additionally, the northern route taken to the launching point was an example of operational maneuver. It facilitated the element of surprise.

Although not a deliberate act of deception, the lack of several carrier task force "call signs" referenced in radio transmissions before and during the Pearl Harbor operation, misled American signal monitoring forces in that they assumed the ships were idle in their home ports.

The task force was instructed to maintain radio silence during its voyage to Oahu. Information was passed to the task force by radio from Tokyo and was coded for secrecy. A receive only communication mode prohibited being located by direction

finding equipment. Communications to and from ships were conducted with ship signal lights.

Sunday morning was selected as the time of the attack. It was determined that the American defensive guard would be at its lowest on that day. It was also assumed that the fleet would be in port, her crews sleeping in late during their normal day off. These assumptions were supported by intelligence information gathered by espionage efforts in Hawaii.

Finally, in Washington DC, Japanese diplomats in the last day leading up to the actual attack, delayed delivering a declaration of war to the State Department until after the Pearl Harbor air strikes had been initiated.

OPERATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE AND INTELLIGENCE

Japan used a network of spies in Hawaii which provided a variety of information. Some of this included the number and type of ships docked at Pearl Harbor, their movements, topography of the area, defensive forces on the island, schedules and location of sea patrols, crew relief procedures, etc. Many of these spies were Japanese nationals which had migrated to Hawaii.¹⁶ Armed with this information, Yamamoto could structure a force to exploit weaknesses in air defense and to successfully destroy the targets identified by his intelligence sources.

Intelligence was also collected by submarines sent to Hawaii to perform reconnaissance missions and by listening to commercial radio broadcasts originating from Hawaii.

Additionally, crews from commercial vessels were involved in intelligence gathering. One such example was in October 1941 when the Taiyo Maru made a trial run to Hawaii using the northern route earmarked for the Pearl Harbor operation.¹⁷ During the voyage, the crew kept a watchful eye for American patrol planes. Daily records of the weather and sea conditions were kept. The ocean liner observed strict radio silence throughout the trip. They encountered enemy patrol planes at approximately 200 miles north of Oahu. Once they arrived at the island, the crew and some of the passengers were involved in other intelligence gathering activities. All of this data was used in the Pearl Harbor planning process and contributed to the operations successful outcome.

EXECUTION

All phases of the Pearl Harbor operation were executed flawlessly. The Japanese sunk or capsized four battleships, two auxiliary ships, and one minelayer. There were 12 others that sustained heavy or moderate damage. Additionally, there were nearly 300 aircraft destroyed or damaged. The Japanese losses included 29 Aircraft and 6 submarines.

Although the operational kills far exceeded Japanese losses, Admiral Yamamoto stated in 1942 that a third and fourth wave of air strikes should have been launched. It was Vice-Admiral Nagumo's (the Carrier Task Force Commander) decision not to do this because he believed at the time that all operational objectives had been achieved and that the longer the task force

remained in Hawaiian waters, the more vulnerable it became. Unlike the United States, Japan could not afford to lose ships because of their limited industrial capacity and shortages of strategic materials. Admiral Nimitz was later quoted as saying that the Japanese commander "missed a golden opportunity in restricting his attack."¹⁸ The reason for this was that Japan had sunk or damaged less than 20 percent of the ships anchored at Pearl on the morning of 7 December 1941. Likewise, important shore support facilities came through the attack without sustaining any damage. Yamamoto never forgave Nagumo for his decision to launch only one strike.¹⁹

Operation orders (OPORDS) were used to execute the plan. As mentioned previously, priorities were established, timing of combat actions were detailed and synchronized to facilitate deconfliction, and an operational reserve of aircraft was committed.

The Japanese felt that there would be a more significant island defense than was actually encountered. The reason for the relative ease of operation for Japanese aircrews during the plans execution was that American island defense forces were placed on Alert Posture One. This action was implemented to facilitate protection of American forces from internal sabotage which was identified by General Walter C. Short, the senior Army commander for the island, as the most probable threat.²⁰ Alert Posture One put Army defensive forces in the worst possible position in that actions taken included lining up aircraft in a

row "wing tip to wing tip" to simplify police protection. Additionally, Army anti-aircraft (AA) weapons were locked up in a secured area to ensure they weren't destroyed. These actions made it easy for the Japanese strike force to destroy Army aircraft on the ground unhindered by AA weapons.

The weather during the transitory phase (Kurile Islands to the launching point) was perfect. For seven days the skies were overcast which provided superb cloud cover for the task force.

Bad weather in the Central Pacific forced the cancellation of the Midway portion of the plan. While returning to Japan however, two carriers, two cruisers, and two destroyers were diverted to Wake Island to assist in its invasion.²¹

CHAPTER III

OPERATIONAL ANALYSIS

Superficially, one might conclude that the Pearl Harbor attack was superbly planned and flawlessly executed. Critical analysis gives one a different perspective. Japan's planning of the operation was flawed in that targets of operational importance were ignored. The plan concentrated on Admiral Yamamoto belief that America's center of gravity in the Pacific was its fleet. Although he was correct in this assumption, he underestimated the value of Pearl Harbor's support facilities and the U.S. Navy's ability to use those facilities to help reconstitute its naval forces.

Potential targets which should have been addressed in the plan include naval repair facilities, fuel storage tanks, and supply dumps. Without these facilities it would have made it significantly more difficult for the United States to rebound from the attack. Destroying the fuel storage tanks which took a considerable amount of time to build and to fill, would have drastically limited the United States Navy's ability to project power in the Pacific. Likewise, demolishing the naval repair and supply facilities would have severely limited the Navy's ability to repair damaged vessels after the attack.

In determining why potentially lucrative targets were not considered, I would submit that Japan fell victim to short

sighted planning motivated in part by Alfred Thayer Mahan's maritime principles. Mahan's teachings focus on destruction of the enemy's fleet as the first task of a navy at war. The attack on Pearl Harbor itself, followed his theory implicitly. The Japanese concentrated their efforts on destroying capital ships and excluded shore based support facilities which were later used to help reconstitute the U.S. Pacific Fleet. It simply did not occur to them that they should pursue complete neutralization of Pearl Harbor; one which targeted both ships and their shore based support system. This strategy would have been more conducive to their overall strategic aim.

The Port Arthur attack during the Russo-Japanese War may have also contributed to weaknesses in the Pearl Harbor target selection process. The Japanese sought to replicate the success they achieved at Port Arthur. Undoubtedly, the operation had some influence on the Pearl Harbor plan. The two operations had one important difference however. Immediately after the Port Arthur action, Admiral Togo's ships blockaded the harbor for five months while Japanese ground troops were launching an offensive. These two actions essentially neutralized the port for the duration of the war. In the case of the Pearl Harbor operation, no naval blockade or land campaign was initiated after the attack, thus recovery operations by the U.S. could be conducted immediately with impunity. Destruction of the logistical facilities would have neutralized Pearl Harbor without committing land forces or implementing a blockade for a

significant period of time. This would have given the Japanese the success similar to that achieved at Port Arthur.

Although the plan did not address logistical facilities, an aggressive task force commander might have targeted them anyway if the initial attack was going well. Japan however, selected the conservative Vice-Admiral Nagumo as its task force commander, who implicitly adhered to the target selection outlined in the plan. When aircraft attack units returned to their ships in jubilation over the ease at which they achieved their objectives, Nagumo ordered the task force to depart the area. He did this over the objections of several of his staff officers who wanted to exploit the situation further.²²

Launching a second attack specifically addressing logistical targets might have made the difference in Japan's long term attainment of its overall strategic objective. It would have allowed Japan more lead time to solidify the Southwest Pacific region and build up island defenses in preparation of a much later U.S. offensive campaign. This might also have allowed the Japanese adequate time to cut off the lines of communication between the United States and Australia. It may have forced the U.S. to more carefully choose between the war in Europe and the Pacific, from a logistical support and weapons deployment priority perspective. A shift toward the Pacific may have been enough to cause the Soviets to pursue a peaceful termination in its war with Germany, complicating the war effort considerably for America.

The plan was also flawed in that targets selected were not prioritized correctly. Although the general opinion in 1941 was that battleships were the most valued ship in the Navy, history has shown us that the carriers represented a more potent force. Admiral Yamamoto believed this to be true yet it was not reflected in his priority of targets." This probably was because Yamamoto's contemporaries did not share his opinion. The priority may have been adjusted to reflect the general consensus of the military establishment at that time and thereby gain overall support for the operation. It is interesting to note that the Japanese were aware seven hours prior to the attack that the carriers and several heavy cruisers were not in port. Primarily because the battleships remained, the operation was allowed to continue.²

If aircraft carriers were reflected as the primary target for the operation, aborting the Pearl Harbor attack would have been a legitimate option. Undoubtedly, this would have been difficult to do given the ramifications it would have on subsequent operations involved in the Japanese campaign. However, failure to postpone the attack until the carriers returned essentially doomed the Japanese Navy in that American

"Several source documents differ with target priorities referenced in this study. The Pearl Harbor Operations: General Outline of Orders and Plans (reference 6 on the bibliography) states that battleships had priority over carriers. The Japanese were aware that the carriers were not anchored at Pearl prior to the attack, yet the operation was allowed to continue. This action would be consistent with the "battleship first" priority.

carriers later devastated the Japanese carrier fleet in June 1942 during the battle of Midway. Ironically, four of Japan's six carriers involved in the Pearl Harbor attack were sunk by U.S. carriers in that battle.

The failure of Japan's intelligence collecting activities to keep them informed of the status of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, was another major problem. This is quite perplexing given the espionage activity they sponsored in and around Oahu. As it happened, failure to adequately track capital ships, essentially placed the Japanese in the unenviable position of having no alternative but to continue with the operation -- regardless of target priorities. The reason for this was that by the time the tactical commander was informed of the carrier's status, the task force had already gone beyond Japan's self-imposed "point of no return".

Another flaw in the plan's development and execution was the failure to consider the significance of Pearl's shallow harbor from an entirely different perspective than weapons employment. The shallow harbor gave the United States an opportunity to salvage and repair ships which ordinarily would have sunk beyond recovery in deeper water's. Out of seven ships sunk or capsized, the Navy was able to salvage three of them by repairing the holes and floating them back to the surface. One of these ships, the Battleship California, won seven battle stars for its participation in later operations during the war.²⁴ A second overall air strike on the plans primary targets

may have inflicted sufficient damage to these ships so that recovery would have either been impossible or cost prohibitive.

It was Vice-Admiral Chuichi Nagumo's decision not to launch a second overall attack. This was a tactical error which ultimately had operational and strategic implications. A second overall attack may have drastically limited United States naval presence in the region for a significantly longer period of time. His decision to limit the attack was driven by his belief that the task force was vulnerable to a counterattack by American carriers thought to be in the area. Fortunately for the United States, the opposite was true. Nagumo's decision was a overly cautious one which negated the possibility of inflicting further damage to Pearl's ships during a time when America's naval forces were at their most vulnerable point.

The employment of 12 Japanese submarines outside the harbor seem to have been completely ineffective. No American ships were sunk by submarines departing the harbor although there is some evidence that a midget submarine fired on a ship in Pearl Harbor. The operation did nothing for building the reputation of midget submarines as viable weapon system. All five were captured or destroyed.

Finally, the plan assumed that the island did not have a long range radar for early detection of flying aircraft; this was not the case. Luck was with the Japanese however, in that Army officers on-duty at the time ignored the warnings and took no action to alert island military forces.

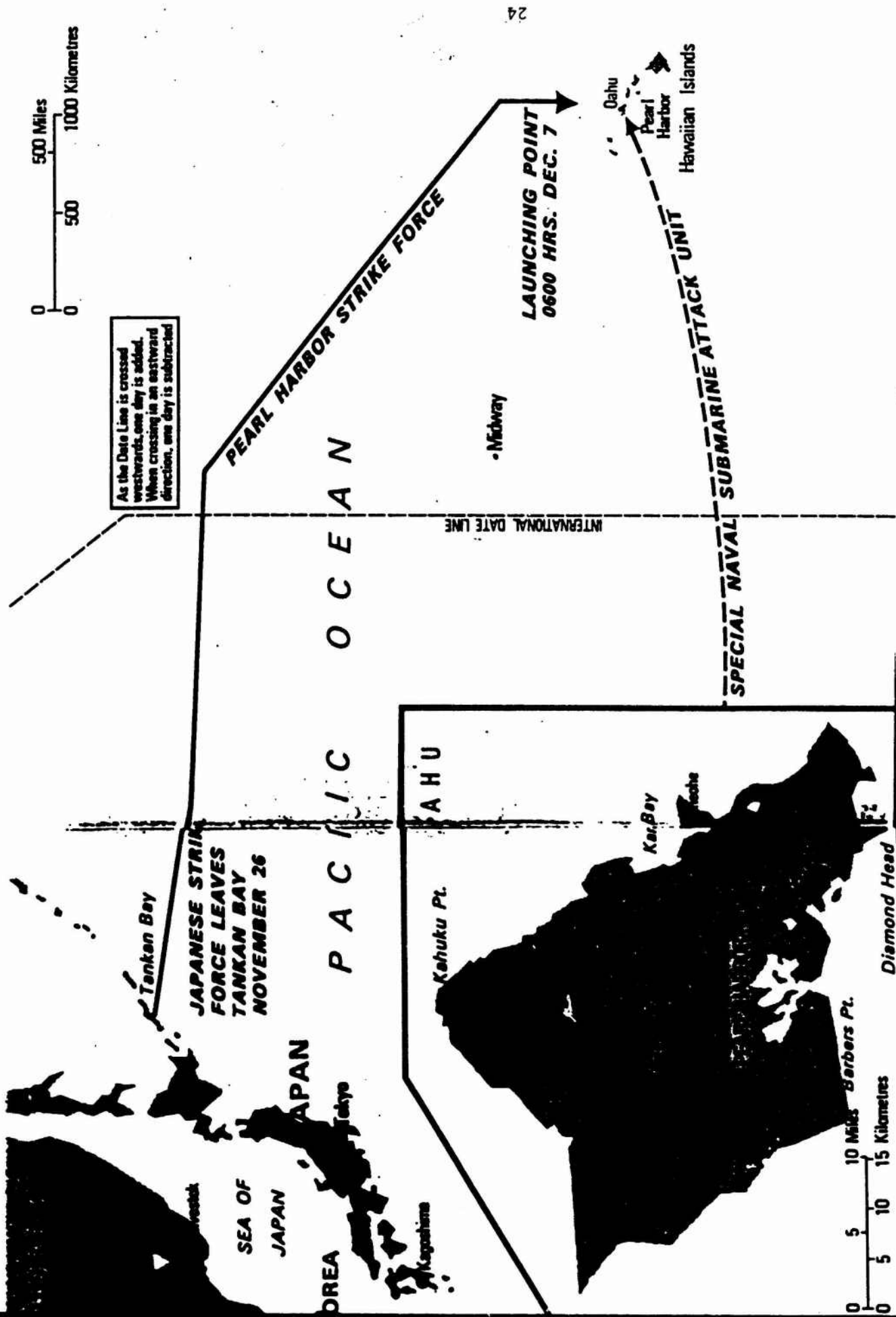
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

One can learn a great deal from past military operations. In the case of Pearl Harbor, tactical and operational level success did not produce the desired end state in the long run for the Japanese. Flaws during operational planning primarily in target selection and priorities, limited the success of the Pearl Harbor attack for the Japanese. This highlights the fact that correctly establishing tactical and operational objectives that support strategic aims is a very difficult but essential process. The primary reason for this is that you can not, with great accuracy, determine the affects of the operation on your adversary's will or ability to react. The key however, to success on the strategic level is the net result of your action(s) at the operational level. Ones maximum effort in this endeavor is therefore absolutely vital.

During plan development, adhering to the principle of simplicity allows for improvisation by operational and tactical commanders during the plan's execution. When opportunities present themselves in the fog of war, commanders must accurately assess the situation, evaluate risks versus gains, and select the best course of action. Clearly, Vice-Admiral Nagumo failed to do this when he decided not to launch a second overall attack. If he had, it probably would not have changed the

outcome of the war, but it certainly would have made victory more difficult to achieve for the United States.



Source: A J Barker, Pearl Harbor (New York: Ballantine Publishing, 1969), p. 24.

Notes

1. A J Barker, Pearl Harbor (New York: Ballantine Publishing, 1969), p. 11.
2. Mitsuo Fuchida and Masatake Okumiya, Midway (New York: Ballantine Books, 1958), p. 26.
3. Barker, p. 11.
4. Fuchida and Okumiya., p. 33.
5. Ibid., p. 34
6. Barker, p. 27.
7. Ibid., p. 16-19.
8. Ibid., p. 155.
9. Ibid., p. 24.
10. Arnold Lott and Robert Sumrall, Pearl Harbor Attack (New Jersey: Leeward Publications, 1974), p. 5.
11. Military History Section, Headquarters Section, Army Far East, Pearl Harbor Operations: General Outline of orders and Plans (Distributed by the Department of the Army, 1953). p. 14.
12. Ibid, p. 20.
13. Barker, p.92.
14. Military History Section, Headquarters Section, Army Far East, p. 11.
15. Barker, p. 40-41.
16. Ibid., p. 46.
17. Gordon W Prange, At Dawn We Slept (New York: McGraw-Hill Book, 1981), p. 313-319.
18. Barker, p. 145-146.
19. Ibid., p. 152.
20. Hans Louis Trefousse, What happened at Pearl Harbor (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1958), p. 59-78.
21. United States Strategic Bombing Survey, The Campaigns of the Pacific War (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1947), p. 20

22. Barker, p. 146.
23. Fuchida and Okumiya, p. 37-38.
24. Lott, p. 24

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